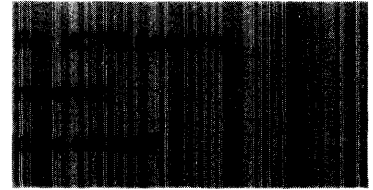


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic Starved Rock (11-Ls-12)

and/or common Site of Fort St. Louis/Le Rocher

2. Location

street & number Starved Rock State Park (6 miles west of Ottawa, off Rte. 71) not for publication

city, town —x— vicinity of Utica congressional district

state Illinois code 17 county LaSalle code 099

3. Classification

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
| <u>—</u> district | <u>x</u> public | <u>x</u> occupied | <u>—</u> agriculture | <u>—</u> museum |
| <u>—</u> building(s) | <u>—</u> private | <u>—</u> unoccupied | <u>—</u> commercial | <u>x</u> park |
| <u>—</u> structure | <u>—</u> both | <u>—</u> work in progress | <u>—</u> educational | <u>—</u> private residence |
| <u>x</u> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <u>—</u> entertainment | <u>—</u> religious |
| <u>—</u> object | <u>—</u> in process | <u>—</u> yes: restricted | <u>—</u> government | <u>—</u> scientific |
| | <u>—</u> being considered | <u>x</u> yes: unrestricted | <u>—</u> industrial | <u>—</u> transportation |
| | | <u>—</u> no | <u>—</u> military | <u>—</u> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name State of Illinois, Department of Conservation

street & number Bureau of Public Lands and Historic Sites

city, town Springfield — vicinity of — state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. State of Illinois Department of Conservation

street & number Bureau of Public Lands and Historic Sites

city, town Springfield — vicinity of — state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings has this property been determined eligible? x yes — no

date 6/29/58 x federal — state — county — local

depository for survey records National Park Service

city, town Washington, D.C. — vicinity of — state —

7. Description

| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> partly excavated | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Starved Rock is the central feature of Starved Rock State Park, six miles west of Ottawa, Illinois, off Route 71. The prominent rock formation with a flat top and sheer sides rises about 150 feet from the south bank of the Illinois River. Composed of St. Peter's sandstone, capped by coal measures, Starved Rock is the most famous of the glacier carved sandstone bluffs, canyons and overhangs that line the southern bank of the river in the park. These outcroppings were brought to the surface as the result of a huge upfold, the LaSalle Anticline. The park area is mostly forested, with recreational facilities, including a large Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed lodge in the west sector of the park.

The following is a description of the completed Fort St. Louis by LaSalle: "Two leagues further down (from the Pestikoui, Fox) is the old village of the Kaskaskias, Illinois, who had abandoned it since the rout caused three years ago by the Iroquois. The news of the fort which I had built here called them back there with other nations. It is situated six leagues (the Library of Congress transcript reads half a league. Six is an error in Margry (J. A. Brown, p. 12) below said village on the left side in going down the river, on the height of a rock steep on almost all sides, which it bathes by the foot in such a way that one can draw water there from the summit of the rock, which has six hundred feet circumference. It is accessible only on one side where the rise is still quite steep. This side is closed by a palisade of white oak posts from eight to ten inches in diameter and twenty-two feet high, flanked by three redoubts made of squared posts set one upon the other at the same height, placed in such a way that one supports the other. The rest of the enclosure of the rock is surrounded by a similar palisade only fifteen feet high because it is not accessible and backed by four others, similar, behind the palisade. There is a parapet of big trees laid lengthwise, one on the other, to the height of two men, the whole filled in with earth; and at the height of the palisade is a sort of "cheval de frise", the points of which are iron to prevent climbing over. The neighboring rocks are all lower than this one and the nearest one is two hundred paces away, the others more, between which and the Fort St. Louis there lies, on two sides, a large valley, which a stream cuts through the middle and floods when it rains. On the other side is a prairie which borders the river, in which, at the foot of the fort there is a beautiful island, formerly cleared by the Illinois, where I and my inhabitants have done our sowing within reach of the muskets of the fort in such a way that one can defend the workers from within the fort and prevent the enemies from landing on the island. The edge of the rock which surrounds the fort, as I have just related, is covered with oaks to a depth of three or four arpents, after which there are vast fields of very good soil. The other side of the river is bordered by a great prairie which the Illinois formerly cultivated. This prairie ends in a hill which reigns all alone, the slope of which is in places covered with woods and leaves in other places great openings through which one discovers the fields which extend beyond* * *" (Anderson, 1896).

(Continued)

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1682–83--1691 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Fort St. Louis was chosen by LaSalle as the base for his administration and planned development of the Mississippi Valley following his voyage of discovery down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. LaSalle who had claimed the Mississippi Valley for the French, was given the power to govern trade in the Illinois country. In 1683, Fort St. Louis was built on top of Starved Rock, a prominent rock formation on the south bank of the Illinois River and across from the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia-Illinois. Fort St. Louis was the first official center and was meant to be a link in a chain of forts which were expected to confine the English colonies to the east coast. The fort also had a strategic position; towering above the lowest rapids in the Illinois River, it controlled a main passage from Canada to the south.

The selection of the fort's position also was influenced by the Indian settlement location. The first Europeans known to enter the area, Louis Jolliet and Fr. Jacques Marquette, stopped at the village of the Illinois Kaskaskia in August 1673. The village was east of Starved Rock (called LeRocher by the French) on the north bank of the river. Two years later, in 1675, Fr. Marquette returned to Kaskaskia and founded the mission of the Immaculate Conception, the first mission in Illinois

In 1673, Jolliet and Marquette found a village of 73 cabins, but by 1680 the Kaskaskia had been joined by other Illinois groups and the community had grown to 400–550 cabins, with a total population of 6,000–9,000 persons. After the destruction of the Kaskaskia village in the fall of 1680 by the Iroquois, the Illinois abandoned the site for about three years and returned only after LaSalle and Tonti had completed Fort St. Louis during the winter of 1682–83 (J.A. Brown, p.7). The Illinois settlement may have included about 300 cabins, probably in a series of contiguous villages. The Illinois remained at this location for about nine years, and then removed in the winter of 1691–92 to the vicinity of Peoria where Tonti had reestablished his fort (J. Brown, p. 7–8).

At the time that the Illinois resettled near Starved Rock in 1683, LaSalle and Tonti had attracted to the vicinity several friendly tribes who had hitherto had little connection with the area. These included a number of the Miami and their member villages, as well as several bands of Shawnee and Mahicans. The Miami, Shawnee, and probably the Mahicans, left the fort and general vicinity in 1688 and 1689 (J. Brown, p.8).

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 25 acres

Quadrangle name Starved Rock

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Kimball Brown

organization

date 9/11/84

street & number Rural Route 1, Box 12

telephone 618-284-3303

city or town Prairie du Rocher

state Illinois 62277

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

For HCRA use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet

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A later party journeying on the Mississippi River described the fort in operation under Henri de Tonti as follows: "Nature fortified it, being steep all around except on one side, still quite difficult, by which one mounts it. The river passes at the foot and M. Tonti has had four big pieces of wood placed so that one might draw water from on high in case anyone came to attack it. The fortifications consisted only of palisades and in a few houses at the edge which enclose it. The place does not contain much more than an arpent and a half in circumference. There are several houses built of pieces of wood and other, more temporary ("plus legeres"), which are only stakes. They were constructed for M. Tonti after he had returned (1687), and which he set aside for M. de La Salle at his arrival, not knowing of his misfortune and his death. Outside of the said houses for the French who were at the said place, there were also a number of huts of savages who had come to build the said fort.There were at that time several families of savages who lived in the said fort.... The houses reached to the edge of the rock and in the places where there weren't any houses there were palisades." (Margry, Vol. III: 494-495)

Fort St. Louis was abandoned by Tonti in 1691, and although it may have been used briefly by Pierre Deliette in 1714-18, it soon fell into decay. There are no visible remains of the 17th century fort today on the nearly flat top of Starved Rock which is sparsely wooded. A path and stairs lead to the top and a walkway encircles the top. At least four archeological excavations have investigated the fort site on the top of the Rock.

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date entered

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After La Salle's death in Texas, the fort under the command of Henri de Tonti, was a base of French and Indian resistance against the Iroquois. Under mounting pressure from their enemies, the Indians finally deserted Starved Rock for safer territory and the fort's usefulness to the French was ended. The Illinois decided to move south and the French followed. Fort St. Louis was abandoned in 1691.

The area was periodically inhabited for short periods by other Indian groups after the Illinois left in 1691. The old fort site briefly regained political importance when Pierre Deliette was appointed commandant of the Illinois in 1714 and returned to the rock. But with the passing of the Illinois country from the jurisdiction of Canada to Louisiana in 1718, the post on the rock was permanently abandoned (J. Brown, p.8).

Two national historic landmarks, Starved Rock and Old Kaskaskia Village (the Zimmerman site) were designated to represent the short period, approximately 1673-1691, when a large number of Indian villages clustered about Fort St. Louis. Approximately a mile apart and on opposite sides of the Illinois River, these two sites are related and were occupied during much of the same time, but were nominated for very different reasons. Starved Rock was the first major center of French influence in the Illinois country, while Old Kaskaskia Village is one of the best known historic Indian Villages, representing an excellent example of Native Americans undergoing rapid culture change.

It is known that many tribes occupied long stretches of both sides of the river bank during the late 17th century. Also the general area was utilized from Paleo-Indian period on and sites from the Archaic through Upper Mississippian have been located in surveys. Remains of a temporary 1682 fort site and associated Indian villages may also exist in the park. The Newell site (Ls-206) which had abundant French materials and is said to have a stockade, is probably of this period.

LATER HISTORIC PERIOD

After 1700 the fort was in irregular use by trading expeditions and Indians. It fell into decay and disappeared. Indian legend has it that during the 1760's a group of Illini took refuge atop the rock while trying to escape from an Ottawa-Potawatomi attack. The Illini were surrounded and starved into submission, thus the name Starved Rock. Except for this legendary incident, the rock was relatively unnoticed until land booms in the 1800's. American settlers reached the area from both ends of the Illinois River. For a short time the area around the rock was the site of a land boom to make it "the Gibraltar of the West", a resort to attract all Americans. This failed, but the area was used as a picnic spot for many years.

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Late in the 19th century, a hotel company developed the site as a vacation area. In 1911 it became a State park after agitation by persons interested in its history and scenery. Today Starved Rock State Park stretches along the very scenic southern bluffs above the Illinois River (Illinois Department of Conservation).

EXCAVATION HISTORY OF THE AREA

In 1930-31, an investigation was undertaken on Plum Island (Ls-3) by the University of Illinois. In 1946, Sara Jones Tucker, University of Chicago, reviewed the documents and maps and identified the probable location of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia. As part of this ethnohistory project, in 1947, a joint project under the direction of Kenneth G. Orr, University of Chicago, and John C. McGregor, Illinois State Museum, investigated and tested at the Zimmerman site (Ls-13) and Starved Rock (Ls-12). Nine test pits were dug and trash pits, a burial and other features were located. Further work was done in 1948 and 1949 by the same institutions. Also in 1949 and 1950, Richard Hagen of the Illinois Department of Public Works and Buildings excavated there. A large number of additional features were found in these projects, including a 16-foot square "dugout" presumed to be associated with Fort St. Louis.

In 1974, the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, under Robert Hall, dug eleven tests pits at Starved Rock and located twenty-seven features, most of which contained both European and Indian artifacts. In 1976, Edward Jelks and John Savini surveyed selected portions of Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks. In 1981, Edward Jelks, Illinois State University, conducted tests on top of the rock in the area planned for a walkway. Eight new features were located. Attempts were made to relocate earlier work but only one pin was located so it was not possible to place all previous excavations on a single map. As with previous work, features located were mainly pits containing mixed European and Indian materials.

Little information about the construction of Fort St. Louis has been obtained from these excavations. There has been a considerable amount of erosion on the rock. Artifacts found include European material such as: brass scrap, a brass button, various items of iron, lead shot, and Indian style items such as tinkling cones made from brass. Native American materials included knives and projectile points of chert and sherds of the Langford, Fisher and LaSalle series. Materials expectable to areas resided in by the French were lacking or rare, such as bottle glass, faience or glazed earthenware and building hardware.

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Starved Rock is located in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, Township 33 North, Range 2 East. The outline of the promontory is roughly identified by the 510 foot contour line on the USGS Starved Rock 7.5 quadrangle.

The National Historic Landmark boundary has been drawn to enclose the rock formation called Starved Rock and a relatively small area of park land around it, which provides a natural setting for the historic fort site, exclusive of modern park facilities, and bounded on the north and east by natural features.

Beginning at the northwest corner and proceeding in a counter-clockwise direction, from a point on the bank of the Illinois River, about 300 feet west of the west line of Section 22, T 33 N, R 2 E, the boundary runs due south for approximately 1100 feet; thence due east approximately 800 feet to the streambed of French Canyon; thence in a generally northeasterly direction, following the stream (or canyon floor) to the south bank of the Illinois River; thence along the south river bank westerly to the beginning point.